Affordable Housing in Stearns County

What is Affordable Housing?

Housing is considered affordable if it consumes 30% or less of a household's gross income. Generally, when households spend more than 30% of their income to meet housing costs, they do not have enough income to meet other basic needs or weather financial setbacks.

The Supply of Affordable Housing Lags Demand

The current and projected unmet affordable housing need through the year 2010 in Stearns County is conservatively estimated at 8,652 low-income households.¹

Lower Income Households Face Extreme Affordability Challenges

The table below shows the number and percent of households in different income brackets that pay over 30% of household income for rental or ownership costs. It illustrates that households with lower incomes spend more of their income on housing costs than those with higher incomes. According to the American Community Survey, the median household income for Stearns County was $46,912 in 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Renters</th>
<th>Home Owners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Households Paying Over 30% in Rent</td>
<td>Percent of Households Paying Over 30% in Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $19,999</td>
<td>3,866</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$34,999</td>
<td>1,466</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000-$49,999</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey, 2005

Stearns County Housing Costs

74% of Stearns County residents own their home and 26% are renters.²

Rental

- A household would need to earn $23,280 to afford the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment ($582/mo).³
- A minimum wage worker would need to work 73 hours per week to afford Stearns County’s fair market rent.⁵
- Approximately 42% of renters in Stearns County pay over 30% of their household income on housing, and 21% of renters pay over 50%.⁶

Homeownership

- Between 1990 and 2000 home prices in Stearns County rose 32% while incomes rose 15%.⁴
- A household would need to earn $47,662 to afford the median priced home ($150,400) in Stearns County.⁶
- Approximately 27% of homeowners in Stearns County spend over 30% of their household income on housing, and 7% spend over 50%.⁸
Homelessness in the Central Region

A one-day survey of people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota estimates that 8,800 Minnesotans are homeless and over 11,000 are precariously housed in temporary or unstable housing.9 Thirty-nine percent (39%) of these are children and youth.10

- On August 26, 2004, 327 people were sheltered in the Central Region, and an additional 39 were turned away because the shelters were full.11

The gap between the cost of housing and what people can afford is a major cause of homelessness.

- One-third of Minnesota’s homeless population cite the inability to afford housing cost as the primary reason for leaving previous housing.12

- Forty percent (40%) report being on the waiting list for Section 8, or other subsidized housing, while 16% are unable to get on the list because it is closed. The median wait time on a subsidized housing list exceeds 10 months.13

In 2003, 30% of all adults experiencing homelessness in Minnesota reported income from work, with 13% working full time.14

- 29% of surveyed adults experiencing homelessness in the Central Region are employed.15

- Of the adults experiencing homelessness in the Central Region who report being employed, 52% are employed full time.16

Other Important Stearns County Housing Facts

- 9% of all Stearns County residents and 7% of children under 18 live in poverty.17

- Stearns County’s population increased by 7% between 2000 and 2005.18

- The average annual unemployment rate in Stearns County was 4% in 2005.19

- A family of four with two full-time wage earners needs to earn a combined annual salary of $42,108 to afford the basic cost of living in Stearns County. 40% of jobs in Stearns County and counties nearby pay less than the regional wage required to afford basic needs.20

Sources:


For more information about this fact sheet or the Minnesota Housing Partnership, call (651) 649-1710 or email info@mhponline.org, or visit our website at www.mhponline.org.